Issue 191 28 October 1995

CBW

Coach and Bus Week

The PSV industry's news weekly

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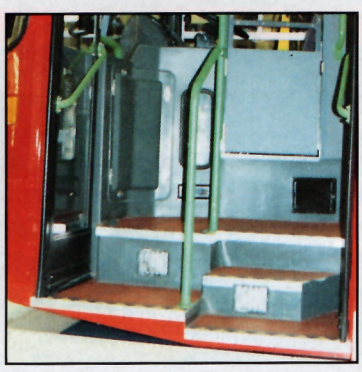
In Europe now but UK ops will have to wait



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A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Issue 191 28 October 1995

CBW

Coach and Bus Week

The PSV industry's news weekly

Greenergy

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FEW in the coach industry will forget the treatment meted out by Customs against a King's Ferry driver, whose coach was found to be carrying a half-hundredweight of cannabis.

He was arrested, bailed out by his firm then, to the surprise of his defence counsel and everyone who'd ever known him, taken to court. Customs attempted to get the offence to stick on the highly circumstantial evidence that the driver was short of cash at the time. The case was thrown out of court.

The experiences of a truck driver this year, held in a Spanish jail for months on end for a similar 'offence' before being acquitted, demonstrates that professional heavy vehicle drivers are safe from neither the drug smugglers nor the authorities. This Summer, too, two Czech coach drivers were arrested on their way back home, at Ramsgate (*CBW* 186). It seems they'd been tailed all around London and, when nobody arrived to relieve the vehicle of its stash of drugs, Customs took the next best option of arresting the drivers.

The driver doesn't have to be involved for everyone to suffer. It is so easy to hide a large quantity of drugs aboard a coach when it's parked up at night, and so hard to spot. Yet acquittal or no acquittal, you can lose the use of the vehicle and its driver - at considerable cost.

There is no sign that either drugs abuse or Customs effort is abating, so it's safe to assume that a repeat of these events is just around the corner. Is there anything the coach operator can do, not just to save his and his driver's neck, but to help catch the villains?

However impractical they are, vehicle checks at the port must surely be a worthwhile precaution. Even five minutes checking under the coach's inspection hatches is time well spent. The old mirror on a stick to check the underside shouldn't be ruled out.

Drivers checking their vehicle once it's on the ferry car deck, with the passengers gone, won't be overlooked by the smugglers. If a driver's suspicion is aroused, he has time to alert Customs staff and simultaneously absolve himself of any involvement.

At the moment, very few coach operators insist that drivers make these checks. Both they and their drivers may live to regret a lack of drug diligence.

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▼ Bus

Bus-only show from Kortrijk

Bus 101 will be launched in '96

by Mark Barton

A NEW European bus-only show is to be launched next year by the organisers of Kortrijk Car & Bus, now one of Europe's major PSV shows.

Called Bus 101, the new bi-annual show will be dedicated entirely to buses and minibuses and will occupy the show halls at Kortrijk in the years between the major coach and bus show. The organisers claim Kortrijk Car & Bus has been a victim of its own success and, with the upturn in the European PSV market, has found itself short of space.

The first Bus 101 - this year being the 100th anniversary of the bus in Europe - will be held at the Kortrijk halls from 7 November to 9 November 1996. The next Kortrijk Car & Bus will be held from 17 October to 22 October 1997.

■ **Postcards from Kortrijk: pages 12 and 13**

▼ Coach and Bus

MTL to acquire R&I

MTL Trust Holdings was this week expected to sign for the acquisition of R&I Tours - the London coach and bus operation.

Both MTL and R&I were tight-lipped about the deal, claiming staff had not been told, but it has been an open secret in the industry for some weeks. It must be seen as a major acquisition not only for its capital, including 75 vehicles, but as a strategic weapon in LT tendering and in coaching.

MTL's presence in London is at present limited to bus operations London Northern and former Gemsam satellite London Suburban, with combined sales of around £3 million. R&I will add £7 million but more importantly, a high-quality tour operation which has some success with lucrative incoming work.

R & I: heading for a deal?

▼ Bus

School buses fail safety tests

OF 21 school buses checked over by Thames Valley Police, only three were free of faults.

After examination at the check site at Witney, Oxfordshire, four vehicles attracted an immediate prohibition - one for collapsed suspension - 11 collected a delayed prohibition, and seven defect notices were issued.

"It was a worthwhile exercise. The number of defects justified our checking of these vehicles," said Sergeant Joe Tripkovic. "But I must add that we have mixed emotions. It was sad to see the condition of vehicles used to transport school children."

▼ Coach and Bus

Orders flood in for Dennis's Dart

COACH and Bus 95 brought Dennis orders for 100 of its Dart Super Low Floor midibus. Demonstrating its 10.6-metre model, which can carry 43 seated plus 20 standees, Dennis tempted buyers from all sizes of bus company. The manufacturer has simultaneously launched a left-hand-drive model for mainland Europe. The Berkhof-bodied bus, which will carry up to 74 passengers, made its debut at the giant Kortrijk PSV show.

▼ Coach

Suspension for Gordons

A SERIES of prohibition notices attracted by vehicles from Gordons Coaches, run by Chris and Mary Millership, has led to a licence suspension.

The Warley operator appeared before traffic commissioner John Mervyn Pugh in Birmingham at a disciplinary inquiry which decided to suspend its eight-vehicle licence until it had met new conditions.

For the firm, Michael Carless said it was Gordons' intention to get rid of the ageing Ford vehicles, which had attracted the prohibitions, within a fortnight. Two new staff members were being drafted in.

He said the business was now thriving through the efforts of Chris Millership. Gordon Millership, the former transport manager in charge of maintenance, was leaving due to ill health. A new licence would be sought incorporating the new staff.

Mr Pugh said he viewed the case very seriously. He doubted the firm could continue in its present form. He said he could not wait indefinitely for hopes and promises to become reality.

Mr Pugh, nonetheless, adjourned consideration of disciplinary action and suspended the licence pending the company's action on the matters discussed. CBW

events ● ● ● events ● ● ● events ● ● ●

30 October: Conference; The Role of the Bus in Public Transport Provision in Scotland, Central Hotel, Glasgow. Details from Harrison Consultancy, tel 0141 946 7788.

14-16 November: Light Rail 95, Croydon. Details from Suzanne Pealing, Transport Science, on 0151 707 0100.

25 November: Coach Industry Awards '95, Metropole Hotel, Birmingham. Details from Lisa Wilson, *Coach and Bus Week* on 01733 63100.

5 December: CIT South Eastern Section conference, Kent Transport through the Millennium, Ashford International Hotel, Ashford Kent. Details from Gerald Uzzell, tel 01227 366322.

12-21 January, 1996: Fourteenth Geneva International Commercial Vehicle show, Palexpo, Geneva, Switzerland. Details from International Commercial Vehicle show Secretariat, PO Box 112, 1218 Grand-Saconnex (Switzerland), tel +41 22 761 11 11, fax +41 22 798 01 00.

▼ Coach

Shearings cash refund pledge

No Cancellation Charter protects customer and agent

Firth (left) and Slatcher launch new charter

by Mark Barton

SHEARINGS has launched a No Cancellation Charter which guarantees set levels of financial compensation to customer and travel agent.

The move coincides with the launch of its 1996 European and British brochures, which include Northern Ireland and Portugal for the first time.

The charter, which Shearings claims is the first to be offered by any UK coach holiday operator, guarantees a substitute holiday of similar or higher standard at no extra cost, plus compensation of £50 per passenger, if any of its tours is significantly altered. If a customer then decides to cancel the holiday completely, Shearings will refund all monies and give £25 compensation.

Whatever the customer decides, Shearings will also compensate the travel agent by £10 per booking for the additional work involved. The charter applies to all holidays departing on or after 7 May 1996 and is being supported by a national and regional advertising campaign.

According to sales director, Phillip Firth, the new charter "follows a Summer where many of our major competitors changed or consolidated a large number of holidays, proving an administrative nightmare for agents as well as reducing customer confidence."

As part of its competitive onslaught, Shearings is also investing £4 million in its Coast & Country Hotel chain and a further £6.5 million in two new passenger interchanges. From Summer next year, Shearings will also be providing car parking at interchanges for the growing number of passengers who would rather drive to join their holiday.

▼ CPT Conference

Norris swan song

OUTGOING transport minister Steven Norris (left) provided one of the main talking points of last week's CPT Conference in Edinburgh by confirming the Government is looking at some form of reregulation of the UK bus market.

"There is no such thing as a free market," Mr Norris said. "All institutions are regulated to some extent." He told the conference the Government was now looking at ways of improving the regulatory framework in the light of experience since 1986. "The trick is to preserve what is good out of deregulation... we need to look at giving the traffic commissioners bisecting powers to subject these services to some sort of timetable regulation," he said.

"We also need to look at traffic commissioners' powers against urban congestion, although much of that caused by buses is over now."

CPT CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- **Ted Hesketh (President CPT) - Peoplepower - Training and the Industry**
- **Veronica Palmer (CPT) - MORI report of Buspower 2000 research**
- **Peter Shipp (EYMS Group) - Quality Need not Cost the Earth**
- **Luc Werring (EC) - Role of the European Union in Quality of Public Transport**
- **Hans Rat (VSN Group, Netherlands) - Profit and Quality**
- **Simon Rider (Investors in People) - Rewards on the bottom line**
- **Fred van Eijk (Forte) - Focusing on the client**

Lockhead plea

FIRSTBUS chief executive Moir Lockhead (right) urged coach and bus operators to move from competition in the market to competition for the market.

He also fired a shot across the bows of the Passenger Transport Authorities for their "open cheque book" approach to local rail services for a minority of passengers.

He warned about the stretched resources of enforcement agencies and claimed that, in some areas, present regulation was underenforced. He thought the downside to on-the-road competition was the public perception of fighting for market share, with such concerns being driven more and more by environmental considerations. He said the freezing of fuel duty rebate was the biggest setback.

▼ Bus

CTA minibus seatbelts call

THE Community Transport Association is pressing the Government to make three-point seatbelts a legal requirement on all minibuses.

The CTA also wants all side-facing seats in minibuses made illegal.

Speaking at the launch of its Minibus Safety Charter, CTA chairman, Ed Passant, said: "There is clear evidence that seatbelts lessen the risk of injury or death and we believe that the fitting of three point belts should be mandatory."

Mr Passant said side-facing seats dramatically increased the risk of injury in a crash and could even result in passengers being thrown out of the vehicle into the path of oncoming traffic.

Operations split by Mellor

MELLOR has divided its bus-building operations into two separate divisions, with coachbuilding remaining in Rochdale and van conversions moving to premises at Westhoughton, near Bolton.

The Rochdale division will continue to trade as Mellor Coachcraft while van conversions will be marketed simply as Mellor. The restructure, which had become necessary due to expansion, was announced at the Community Transport Association's minibus and accessible transport show in Blackpool, where Mellor also showed its latest van conversion - based on the Iveco Daily 45.10 - in public for the first time.

■ CTA show review page 8

In brief

LT campaign

LONDON Transport Buses has launched a new £1.2 million advertising campaign to reduce the number of cars on London's streets. The Get About Get a Bus campaign will be promoted on bill-boards at around 600 traffic black spots and on posters on more than 2,000 buses. The message will be backed up by adverts on five London radio stations.

909 doubled

STAGECOACH East Midlands has doubled the frequency of its 909 express service to every 30 minutes. Following its launch in the Summer, service 909 now runs every half hour from Sheffield, Doncaster, Meadowhall, Scunthorpe, Brigg, Hull and Grimsby.

New CitySAVER

FIRSTBUS subsidiary Thamesway has launched a CitySAVER shopping express coach service linking Woodford Green, Chingford, Walthamstow and Ilford to the Lakeside complex at Thurrock and Eastgate Shopping Centre at Basildon. The service has its own yellow and orange livery and a special telephone helpline for passengers.

MVA retained

THE MVA Consultancy has been retained by London Transport and the London boroughs to handle the £1.5 million Greater London Bus Passenger Survey (GLBPS). The contract, which enables the use of concessionary free travel for elderly and disabled residents of Greater London to be measured accurately, runs continuously for the next two years.

10,000th job

FOLLOWING an expansion of its workforce and number of mobile vans, Autoglass has carried out its 10,000th coach and bus job so far this year. The job, for North East Bus, was completed by Autoglass's Tyneside branch during this month's Coach & Bus 95 show.

▼ Coach

Transit's Heathrow Tube gi

Janet Jeffery, Thames Transit md confident Tube will be a success

Oxford Tube - recipe

by Mark Barton

THAMES Transit has launched a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week express coach service linking its Oxford base with Heathrow.

Branded the Heathrow Tube, the new service is a direct development of Transit's pioneering Oxford Tube service to London, which chairman Harry Blundred claims was the first 24-hour coach service in Europe.

"The Oxford Tube was the start and shape of things to come," said Thames Transit managing director Janet Jeffery. "We have built it up from scratch and today it is one of the most famous coach services in the UK and carries one million passengers a year.

▼ Coach

PSV Glass wins Marcopolo UK contract

PSV Glass has won the glass distribution contract for the growing number of Portuguese-built Marcopolo coaches operating in Britain.

Some 16 Marcopolos are currently in the hands of British operators and, following the recent NEC show, another 18 are on order. Base price for the standard 240 version with 53 seats is £116,000.

Marcopolo's UK concessionaire, DSB Sales, has appointed PSV Glass to provide the complete stocking and distribution service for all replacement glass required by British operators of the vehicles.

"Replacement glass is an urgent distress purchase and so this agreement is very good news for UK operators of Marcopolo vehicles," said DSB managing director, John Dunn. "PSV Glass is undoubtedly the country's most capable distributor and we are confident their service and resource will provide operators with precisely the high level of support that they look for in this crucial area."

The new deal follows hot on the heels of a similar recent agreement covering glass for Neoplan in the UK. Under the terms of this latest agreement, PSV Glass will be totally responsible for the replacement glass service for UK-based Marcopolos - storing, controlling and distributing it to meet operators' needs.

▼ Bus

Working vehicles prove theory that electric

ELECTRIC buses are significantly greener and cleaner than conventional diesel-powered vehicles, according to just-published research into the pioneering battery-powered bus service in Oxford.

Go-Ahead subsidiary Oxford Bus Company has been running four electric Optare MetroRiders under tender on a route linking the railway station, city centre and university since November 1993.

Research into the UK's only electric-powered service buses has been so encouraging that local planners are already talking about banning access to Oxford's congested city centre streets to any polluting bus.

A report on the buses' first 500 days of operation shows that - even taking account extra pollution caused at the power station - electric buses emit 98 per cent less carbon monoxide, 93 per cent fewer hydrocarbons and 96 per cent fewer particulates than their diesel equivalents. They produce far

Green power: cleaner

ves round-the-dock service

for another TT winner

"The Heathrow Tube is the service people have been asking us to provide. We have received so many telephone calls asking us to run this service. I think it will be just as successful as its sister."

The Heathrow Tube is run by four ex-Wallace Arnold Volvo Plaxton 3500s, moved over from Transit's Oxford to Heathrow multi-stop 390 route, which still continues, and painted in a stunning new livery with a 28ft jet heading skyward. Frequency is hourly up to 11.15pm and fares are aggressively priced at £5 single, £7 day return and £8 period return. Tube passes can be bought for periods of a week up to a full year.

The sky's the limit: Heathrow Tube livery is a technicolour jet

▼ Bus

Talking 'sign' of the times in Leeds

THE new Leeds bus station is believed to be the first in the world to feature talking signs for visually-impaired passengers.

Instead of using braille maps, blind bus-users can now press a button on an attractively designed electronic box and hear the bus stand number, followed by the route number.

The 'signs' are activated by a large yellow button, which is built into the queue rails at each of the 26 bus stands in Leeds station. People with failing vision can usually see the colour yellow and totally blind passengers can feel for the button along the rail.

Electronics engineer, Jim Draper, who developed the system and is now marketing it through his company Pennine Talking Signs, said: "I have in the past supplied braille numbers for bus stands, but only three per cent of blind people can read braille and I wanted to improve access to information for the one person in every 60 who cannot read print, even with glasses. The system is very affordable and easy to install and my heavy-duty vandal-resistant unit is to be installed at unmanned railway stations."

The talking sign, also to be installed in Liverpool's Paradise Street bus station, can be programmed to relay any message in the installer's own voice if required.

■ **Pennine Talking Signs is at PO Box 247, Huddersfield, HD1 3YT, tel 01484 844084.**

buses are 'greener' than diesel equivalents

and just as cheap to run

less carbon dioxide and acid gases and are much quieter in operation.

The report, produced with the backing of joint promoters Southern Electric and Oxfordshire County Council, shows the electric buses covered over 77,000 miles and carried over 200,000 passengers in their first 18 months of operation.

Reliability was generally very good, with average availability during the period of 85 per cent. Problems were experienced with battery cells drying out. But this was due to vehicles running more efficiently than expected and batteries not being fully discharged before receiving more power. This problem was overcome by running the service with three instead of four vehicles from the start of year two.

Because of high design and development costs spread over just four vehicles, the electric MetroRiders cost over twice as much as their diesel counterparts. But repair and maintenance costs were on a par.

CBW

In brief

MoT fees set

NEW maximum fee levels for the MoT test are now in force. The revised fee for non-PSV buses (class VII) has gone up from £28.84 to £29.84. According to the Department of Transport, the increased fees take account of inflation and the introduction of new emissions testing equipment necessary to fulfil the stricter testing standards due early next year.

Bridge tolls

FOLLOWING the controversy over tolls on the newly-built Skye bridge, the Scottish Office has announced that minibuses used for educational and recreational purposes will be charged as a car. Operators of the new bridge, Skye Bridge Ltd, are now replicating as closely as possible the tariffs charged by ferry operator, Caledonian MacBrayne, on the Kyle crossing.

DAF and DAB

DAF Bus International BV of Holland has become the DAB importer for the Benelux countries. Danish-owned DAB is probably best known for its radical Servicebus which has a vertically-mounted rear engine and hydrostatic transmission allowing an ultra low and completely flat floor of 230mm in the driving position and just 170mm kneeling. Following its appointment as importer, DAF Bus is also planning to introduce DAB's modern 12-metre low-floor city bus into Benelux countries.

Cummins top

CUMMINS is now the number one engine supplier to the UK commercial vehicle industry, according to the latest figures from the SMMT. Sales so far this year have taken Cummins to a 19.4 per cent market share for all CVs above 3.5 tonnes. That puts Cummins ahead of all OEM engine suppliers and is almost 10 times greater than the nearest other independent engine maker.

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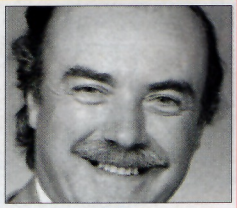

Ian Haddon: new speaker

So put a ring round 16 November in your diary, and you'll be glad you did. Ron Whittle, of Go Whittle, will help you nail down your coach costs, John Johnson of Johnsons Coaches will show how to acquire and keep a good reputation, and Ian Haddon of R&I Tours will show how ISO 9002 is a sales tool as well as a standard.

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▼ Coach

An accessible market

Blackpool's CTA show stand had plenty to offer

by Alan Millar

OVER 70 manufacturers of complete vehicles or accessory equipment took space at Blackpool's Norbreck Castle Hotel last week for the Community Transport Association's Minibus & Accessible Transport Exhibition.

This is one of the highspots of the year for buyers and manufacturers of small, wheelchair accessible buses but, with the increasing interest in this market from commercial operators, there were some worthwhile exhibits to interest mainstream coach and bus operators.

Bedwas Bodyworks launched the latest version of its Mobilis bus range, on an LDV 400 chassis. The Securicor subsidiary has diversified out of the parcel van market and the Mobilis - its first complete bus - uses a mix of galvanised steel, aluminium and grp. Already launched on Ford Transit and Iveco Dailybus chassis, Bedwas plans to add Mercedes-Benz and other vehicles to its range. It says it's interested in selling to PSV operators, but most vehicles go to the welfare market.

The Mobilis range combines as many common features as possible without sacrificing opportunities to win business from customers who are still used to being able to specify bespoke products.

TBP showed its distinctively-shaped Freeway II, its low-floor six-wheeler based on the Peugeot Boxer. Birmingham-based TBP has invested £1.25 million in its successor to the Talbot Express-based Freeway/Pullman.

At Blackpool, sales manager Peter Kitt revealed that 30 orders have already been placed ahead of the start of full production. "Once it's established, we hope to sell 150 a year. That may take us 18 months to achieve, but it's already proving very acceptable and the Boxer front is a good improvement on the Express. We've had considerable interest for it in its PSV mode, as it's a small-to-medium vehicle that meets 1997 DPTAC standards."

Mr Kitt believes the 25-seat PSV Freeway II, selling for £52,500 with turbocharged engine as standard, will fit into the low-floor market below more expensive vehicles like Marshall's rear-engined Minibus. "With front-wheel drive, the technology isn't there for anything over 115hp, five tonnes or 25 seats, so this is as large as a front-engined low-floor bus can be."

Once it reaches its UK target, TBP plans to export the Freeway II: "It has serious export potential which we intend to cultivate in due course."

Ratcliff unveiled a new automatic underfloor lift, the RUL300A, fitted in a Crystals-converted Mercedes-Benz 609D demonstrator. The new lift is designed for minibuses with a floor height of up to one metre and goes into production in January. Ratcliff has already taken orders for the new design and is quoting delivery dates from late January onwards.

Main feature of the lift is its two-button hand-held operation. To speed up its operation, its cassette front cover opens and closes automatically as the lift is used. Its 22mm thick platform transfers easily on to the lift and the handrails and safety guards are designed for passenger confidence and security. CBW

TBP Freeway: 30 orders placed before start of full production

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▼ Coach and Bus

Dennis opens new after-market centre

48,000 sq ft parts and service facility will allow for growth the company expects

by Mark Barton

DENNIS Specialist Vehicles has strengthened its after sales support with the opening of a major new customer service centre and the appointment of a new director to head up the company's UK and overseas aftermarket business.

The new 48,000 sq ft parts and service centre has been set up to provide aftersales support to the growing number of operators running Dennis coaches and buses in this country.

It houses all of the company's parts and will also be responsible for CKD (completely knocked down) parts marshalling for Dennis's expanding export business.

Customer service and parts centre releases factory production space

"We have always taken care to ensure that our parts and service support has kept pace with our growing sales success," said Dennis managing director, John Smith.

"Until now we have managed this by expanding existing facilities.

"However, our new customer service centre has been designed not only to serve the existing Dennis fleet but to allow for the growth we are planning for the future."

The new customer service centre has released space at its neighbouring production plant but Dennis has also bought a further 2.75 acres of land alongside its aptly-named Dennis Way site in Guildford. A three-phase plan to develop this site is now under discussion.

Dennis's total after-market operation is under the control of David Berry, who joined Dennis last week from Shearings to become its customer services director.

■ People page 47

Movies

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Postcards fro

New bodies from Van Hool and Berkhof. Space-ag 13.5-metre bodies from...well, almost everyone. boxes. This year's Kortrijk show had it all. Mark mainland Europe's top coach

Van Hool

EVOLUTION, not revolution has been the guiding philosophy at Van Hool for many years now and the new body style to take it into the 21st century is no exception.

Launched at Kortrijk as the T9, it is available as an integral in Europe now, but UK operators will have to wait until next year at the earliest to get their hands on the first chassied examples.

Most British operators at Kortrijk thought it the star of the show, impressed by its clean, timeless lines - proof against changing fashions - and its beautiful build quality. Advances on the old T8 body include a modular air-conditioning system and improved ergonomic layout of the dashboard, with storage compartments and optional refrigerated glovebox. The Setra-style wing mirrors, now adopted by all Continental builders on their flagship vehicles, are electrically heated and the right-hand one gives three different angles - standard, wide angle and one for checking people boarding the coach. To underline its pre-eminence in Europe, Van Hool had segregated a special area on the biggest stand in Kortrijk to show its prestige version of the T9.

Developed under the direction of Jan Van Hool, one of 17 family members actively involved in the business, this vehicle's beautifully pared-down lines made the standard T9 look fussy. Interestingly enough, Van Hool will build the same number of coaches this year - around 1,500 - as it has done for the last five years.

Extra turnover, and the ability to invest in costly research and development - two years and a full-size clay model for the T9 alone - has come from added value not volume.

Berkhof

ALTHOUGH some 24 have already been sold, Berkhof's new Axial body will only fully replace the Excellence in two years time. And importer AVE Berkhof is still in negotiations over arrangements for the UK.

Berkhof has taken a radical departure with design of the Axial. In effect, it is the opposite of Van Hool's approach. This is revolution not evolution. Although the rear end is basically the same as the Excellence, the front end has been radically redesigned to be given a new Berkhof grille and steeply rearward sloping windscreen.

As Berkhof itself put it: "A veritable eye catcher." But it is also practical - the bumper, for example, folds to allow ready access to the spare wheel. Inside, the new two-piece dashboard is suitably rounded and, yes, there is a refrigerated glove compartment.

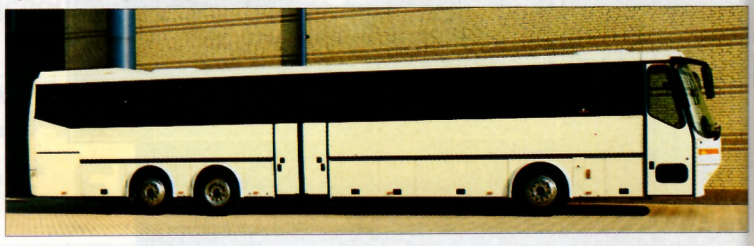
Radiator heating system, baggage racks and canopy are all new, as is the driver's seat. Axial is available in 10, 12 and 13.5-metre lengths.

Dennis

DENNIS was once again the only British bus builder exhibiting inside the Kortrijk show complex. It is now marketing its super low-floor Dart chassis in the low countries as the DM-94 and showed a Berkhof-bodied 10.6-metre example in NZH colours. As part of its on-going drive into Continental Europe, Dennis now has sales offices in most major European countries, including Greece, and is offering the SLF Dart to all mainstream Continental bodybuilders.

Big is beautiful in Europe as manufacturers an

A THEME running throughout Kortrijk was the elongated coach and bus. Operators on the Continent certainly see a market for 13.5 or even 15-metre rigid vehicles and manufacturers are adding to the pressure being applied to Brussels and national Governments to allow their unrestricted operation throughout mainland Europe. Pressure is even growing for a derogation in the UK and it is believed that some progress is being made. Some bigger operators are talking about not if, but when 15-metre coaches will be legal in this country. Currently only 15-metre public service buses are officially



n Kortrijk

e coaches from Israel. 15-metre and Plus, of course, refrigerated glove- Barton guides you around one of nd bus shows

Iveco

IVECO brought in famed automotive designer Giorgio Giugario to design its limited-edition TopClass ultra luxury version of the EuroClass HD.

Alongside this as yet unpriced flagship, Iveco showed a more down-to-earth Euroclass HD, the urban Cityclass bus and a EuroRider chassis.

Merkavim

ISRAEL'S largest bodybuilder, Merkavim, caused a stir on its debut appearance at Kortrijk.

The space-age looks of the Meteor won the poetically-named Most Beautiful Bus of the Show award, but left most British operators baffled.

However, Volvo is believed to be interested enough to be negotiating a 50 per cent stake in the company, which already has 45 Meteors on the road in Israel and builds around 350 vehicles a year. A deal with Volvo could secure distribution in Europe but meanwhile Merkavim is looking for outlets throughout the Continent and even the UK.

Meteor is currently available on Volvo, MAN and Mercedes chassis and costs around DM 350,000 or £160,000 for all the usual bells and whistles, including video and split unit air conditioning (which, along with opening side windows, is required by law in Israel).

Haargaz

LOOKING for a European distributor is another Israeli distributor making its debut at Kortrijk. Haargaz Transportation brought two models to Belgium - a Mercedes 0404 RH built under licence and a MAN-based city bus. The Mercedes is priced at around £160,000 and is available in low and high-floor versions. Haargaz claims to be leader in the Israeli bus market.

Scania

SCANIA is pushing back the frontiers of bus design with its latest fully built, low-floor city bus concept, which will be put into production in Autumn 1996. Its futuristic design is based on a modular concept and makes extensive use of aluminium and plastic: the body is built of extruded aluminium profiles joined together with bolts. A low-floor is achieved throughout most of its length by fitting a traverse engine at 60 degrees, but four seats are still fitted on a raised platform above the engine. All seats are attached to the wall for ease of cleaning. An ethanol-powered engine will be an option, with twin fuel tanks above the front wheel housings.

d operators call for law sanctioning 15 metres

allowed in mainland Europe, although an exception has been made in Germany. Shown below are just some of the monsters which made their very considerable presence felt at this year's show.

From left to right: Berkhof Volvo-based 15-metre citybus, the first 15-metre Dutch service bus for VSN subsidiary Midnet; 15-metre Bova Futura FLD Magnum, 69 seats and available in 13.5-metre; Setra S217 HDH 13.65-metre tri-axle with 59 seats; Special edition 13.5-metre Berkhof DAF for Dutch state-owned operator, NZH.

CBW

"Take Me Home Coun

"We are very pleased with our Scania Centurys. They have undoubtedly further drivers and engineers alike. They are among the best vehicles we have ever bought"

try Roads *by* **Scania**

enhanced the company's image and have been positively received by passengers,
– Peter Meadows, Joint Managing Director, L F Bowen Limited, Coaching Division.

▼ Maintenance

Couple must wait for possib over alleged local service ir

Inquiry told they totally denied not operating in accordance with registration and

by Michael Jewell

TROY and Ann Marsh have to wait to see what action Eastern traffic commissioner Brigadier Compton Boyd is going to take over alleged failures to operate local services in accordance with their registered particulars.

Colin Ward, for the Marshs, of 28 Seathorne Crescent, Skegness, Lincolnshire, told a Cambridge public inquiry they totally denied not operating in accordance with their registration and that they had operated an unregistered service.

Brigadier Boyd said the Marshs' held a standard national licence for nine vehicles and a special restricted taxi licence for four vehicles. It was alleged:

- They had operated an unregistered service between Skegness and Butlins Funcoast World
- Their registered service between Skegness and Ingoldmells Village and their special taxi service between the same two places had not been operated in accordance with their registered particulars
- They had been setting down passengers at Skegness Railway Station, which was not a registered setting down place.

Peter Allsop, head of the PSV and bus licensing section of the Eastern Traffic Area, said they had first received complaints about the Marshs' operations in early 1992. Further complaints were received from other operators, particularly Lincolnshire Road Car, in late 1992 and early 1993.

However, investigations at that time proved inconclusive. The crux of the complaints was that the Ingoldmells service was not operating to timetable and other operators were unable to decide exactly what was being operated.

Further monitoring was carried out in 1994 as the complaints continued. Both Mr and Mrs Marsh held O-licences of their own at that time. It was apparent the service was being operated under both licences and it was difficult to determine what was being operated under each licence. Advice that they ought to seek a partnership licence was accepted.

The complaints, nonetheless continued,

The complaints were mainly from Lincolnshire Road Car and Lincolnshire County Council

said Mr Allsop, predominantly from Lincolnshire Road Car and Lincolnshire County Council. He wrote to the Marshs, who visited the Traffic Area Office early this year. They were advised to re-write the timetable in a more expansive form, instead of referring to the service as a frequent service, and they followed that advice. The timetable was agreed and copies were sent to Lincolnshire Road Car and the county council.

In May he wrote to the Marshs, pointing out that, from 1 February, the circumstances when duplicate vehicles could be operated were limited, in that the operator had to have reasonable grounds to expect that, owing to special circumstances, the number of vehicles normally expected to operate would be insufficient to carry all the passengers unless additional vehicles were provided. The letter ended with a warning of the consequences if they failed to operate in accordance with their registrations.

Unfortunately, the complaints continued and, when Mr Marsh's explanation was deemed not to be wholly satisfactory, a monitoring exercise was set up on 15 June . He personally observed 20 departures in Lumley Road, Skegness, the start of the service, when only 15 were scheduled. He later observed two vehicles enter Butlins from Skegness, wait for passengers and then depart to Skegness. It was difficult to tie in many of the observations with the scheduled times.

After Mr Ward had suggested the county council complaint had been generated by an anonymous letter from a local resident, Mr Allsop said that had been a recent letter and it was not the subject of the present proceedings.

Brigadier Boyd said he was only concerned with the results of the monitoring exercise. The complaints had merely been the trigger.

In reply to Mr Ward, Mr Allsop agreed an application had been made to vary the timetable three weeks before the monitoring exercise was undertaken, but pointed out the variations were not in force on 15 June. He agreed that, in March, he said he thought the diversion into Butlins was a minor variation which could be done without an application. He said he understood at that time the vehicle would continue with the registered route afterwards.

The clerk to the commissioner, Michael Molyneaux, said he had seen four vehicles arrive at Ingoldmells when only three were scheduled. It was meant to be a 30-minute trip but one vehicle only took 17 minutes.

He later spoke to Mr Marsh outside Butlins, who said the vehicles at Butlins

It transpired that Butlins would only allow vehicles on the site to carry passengers to or from it

were duplicates on the Skegness/Ingoldmells service and they were "regular duplicates" operating all day. A timetable displayed advertised a 15-minute service. It transpired Butlins would only allow vehicles on the site to carry passengers to or from it, and he suggested to Mr Marsh it should be registered as a separate service.

Vehicle Inspectorate enforcement co-ordinator Christopher Broster said he had spoken to a number of drivers at Lumley Road who said they were on a service between Skegness and Funcoast World.

A cab driver initially told him she covered the bus route and did not run to a timetable. However, she later said she was on a round trip every half hour. Another driver was unable to produce a timetable.

Jim Carpenter, the Lincolnshire Road Car driver in charge at Skegness, said he had observed Marsh vehicles dropping passengers off outside the railway station.

Mr Marsh said he had visited the Traffic Area on a number of occasions to discuss the Butlins service, as he knew Lincolnshire Road Car "would squeal like a stuck pig" if they lost the contract.

He had asked how it could be covered by the existing registered route as it was only a 20 yard deviation. At no time was he told he needed to register a separate service. He obtained the Butlins contract at a week's notice. He already had a stop outside Butlins on the existing service and, when he got the contract, Butlins set up a stop inside as everybody had to have a pass to enter the site.

If the service bus was full, the bus that left Butlins for Skegness would pick up passengers en route to Skegness. The only people who had been taken to the railway station were Butlins holidaymakers who pre-booked the journey and paid the driver the day before. He had regarded that as a private contract.

Brigadier Boyd said that paying the day before was no different than paying the same day.

Mr Marsh said they had been asked by the customer services department

le action regularities

running an unregistered service

at Butlins if they could take passengers to the railway station. He agreed he did not have a contract with Butlins to take people to the railway station and said that, when they were told it was not right, they stopped doing it. They subsequently registered the route and they did not do it again until the registration came in.

In reply to the commissioner, Mr Marsh said the police sometimes moved the buses on at Lumley Road, so the drivers would go round and park on the seafront before coming back on to the route.

Vehicles would leave early if they were full. They had changed the timetable as they had found it was not

Vehicles were arriving early and parking up behind one another because they had allowed too much time

workable. Vehicles were arriving early and parking up behind one another because they had allowed too much time. It took six weeks to alter timetables and meanwhile they had to carry on as best they could.

They now employed an inspector to ensure the drivers kept to time as best they could. They had not been "sneaking about trying to put additional runs in." It had been a genuine mistake. There had been no intention to be devious or underhand.

Brigadier Boyd said there had to be a sudden and unexpected need for a duplicate and duplicates could not be used for something that was predictable but Mr Marsh said he had thought Butlins was an "unexpected need" as they did not know how many people wanted to travel at a given time.

Brigadier Boyd said duplication was a recipe for cheats and that was why duplicates could only run when there was a pressing and unpredictable need. Duplicates could, and had been in the past, a cheat's charter. That was why the law was now pretty specific.

Mr Marsh said they could not have gained an advantage as no other operator would be allowed into the camp. Mrs Marsh said the monitoring exercise could not have been carried out on a worse day. Timings were out because two drivers were off sick and one vehicle was late as it needed a defect repairing.

Brigadier Boyd said he could no understand why the Marshs just did not register the service after winning the contract.

Mr Ward said they had got it right now. He argued that what the commissioner had heard amounted to a "reasonable excuse." They had been errors of omission rather than commission, through a lack of understanding and misdirection, in that Mr Marsh had misdirected the Traffic Area staff by not telling them of the "lock out" situation at Butlins.

There was no evidence the Marshs had done what they did for any material gain, or of any unlawful wrongdoing. Registered services were the firm's lifeblood. They provided a good service, otherwise there would have been complaints from members of the public. They had not done anything underhand.

LICENSING & LEGAL

LICENSING & LEGAL

Ernest Fothergill given eight months to prove he is a competent operator

THOUGH initially deciding to revoke the three-vehicle licence held by Ernest Fothergill, trading as Fothergill Coaches of Rainworth, Mansfield, North Eastern Traffic Commissioner Keith Waterworth decided instead to cut its duration, effectively giving Mr Fothergill eight months in which to prove that he can operate properly.

Mr Fothergill appeared at a Leeds disciplinary inquiry, at which Mr Waterworth said that his position was "rather dark". The proceedings arose out of a decision made on prima facie evidence to revoke the licence. He had made that decision after reading Mr Fothergill's history,

nance examination was carried out. Three vehicles were examined, one vehicle being issued with an immediate prohibition. At the time of that inspection, maintenance was being carried out by Brian Fothergill and two outside contractors. The inspection records were not being properly completed, the road and brake testing sections having been left blank. Some of the inspection periods were excessive. Before he

'Agreeing that every time Mr Richardson visited his premises he always found something wrong, Mr Fothergill said that he thought that he was being victimised by Mr Richardson'

went into prison, the general maintenance had been carried out by Ernest Fothergill. There

es he always found something wrong. Mr Fothergill said that he thought that he was being victimised by Mr Richardson. He had made a complaint in writing and he thought that he had been victimised even more since. In June 1992, the then traffic commissioner was content with the maintenance arrangements. The maintenance contractor no longer did the inspections as he had either been unable to contact him, or he

could not fit the vehicles in.

1992 he was sentenced to nine months imprisonment at Nottingham Crown Court for causing death by reckless driving, being disqualified from driving for two years. He served four months of his sentence. At the time of the offence he was driving a private car. A motorbike pulled in front of him and he swerved. The car turned over knocking him unconscious. A passenger in the rear of the car died as a result of hitting his head on the pavement. Though he felt some responsibility, he did not feel it was all his fault. He was advised to plead guilty as the police were unable to contact a witness.

Mr Fothergill agreed that he had been convicted of a speeding offence in March 1992, receiving three penalty points, and that in

Mr Waterworth said that each and every conviction "muddied the water".

Mr Fothergill said that, as he had been disqualified from driving, he would be working full time in the workshop. The vehicles were inspected every month. All the inspection records since the examiner's visit and his return to the business had been completed satisfactorily. One of the vehicles Mr Richardson inspected was off

'Questioned further, Mr Fothergill said that in October 1992 he was sentenced to nine months imprisonment at Nottingham Crown Court for causing death by reckless driving'

ended it as "bed-time reading."

Cutting the duration of the licence so that it now expires at the end of the year, instead of in June 1997, and imposing a condition prohibiting Mr Fothergill from undertaking any local service work, Mr Waterworth said that there had been a number of previous public inquiries, mostly to do with maintenance. Variation applications had also often been refused due to inadequate maintenance.

FLASHBACK: To previous disciplinary inquiry (*CBW*, 29 May, 1993)

▼ Maintenance

Fothergill throws in the towel

SHORTLY before he was due to appear at a Leeds disciplinary inquiry before North Eastern traffic commissioner Keith Waterworth, Ernest Fothergill surrendered his three-vehicle O-licence.

Mr Fothergill, who traded as Fothergill Coaches, of 12 Hall Close, Rainworth, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, had previously appeared at a number of public inquiries, mostly to do with his maintenance record.

The commissioner initially decided to revoke the licence on maintenance grounds in May 1993 but, at a subsequent public inquiry, decided to give Mr Fothergill eight months to prove himself, warning that, if there were further problems, Mr Fothergill would have to "get used to life without public service vehicles," (*Coach and Bus Week*, 29 May, 1993).

▼ Employment law

Firm made unlawful deduction

A MANCHESTER industrial tribunal has ruled that Highfield Mini Coach Hire Ltd made an unlawful deduction from the wages of a driver, after concluding the company had no authority to suspend him without pay.

As a consequence, it ordered the company to pay Philip Merrick £120.

The tribunal said the company, of 203 Ormskirk Road, Wigan, Lancs, had suspended Mr Merrick for a week for disciplinary reasons.

Mr Merrick did not have a written contract of employment.

Moreover, there was nothing in writing which gave the company the power to suspend employees without pay.

In suspending Mr Merrick without pay, the company had made an unlawful deduction from his wages and was, therefore, in breach of the 1986 Wages Act.

Although Mr Merrick was suspended for five days, it was accepted he had already arranged to take two days unpaid leave during the relevant period.

It followed from that he had lost three days' pay, and the tribunal made an order he be paid for those three days.

▼ Licensing

Full five-year renewal granted

MINSTERLEY Motors won the full five-year renewal of its O-licence at a Birmingham public inquiry before West Midland traffic commissioner John Mervyn Pugh.

John Barry Jones, Lawrence Albert Evans and Carl Evans, trading as Minsterley Motors, of Stiperstones, Minsterley, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, had applied for renewal in respect of 19 single deckers and one minibus.

Mr Pugh said that, when he previously renewed the licence for 18 months he had asked for the production of 12 months accounts before any further renewal. Those accounts had been received and all now seemed to be going well.

Carl Evans said the vehicles were maintained every five weeks. They had a flow chart showing when inspections were due, a drivers' daily nil defect reporting system and letters had been written to their drivers pointing out their responsibilities.

They had no prohibitions imposed on their vehicles since introducing that system. The only matter had been a defect notice issued in Shrewsbury bus station for a defective tailpipe.

▼ UK

Customline relaunched

SALLY Line has relaunched its Customline brochure with the accent on a "customer friendly" approach.

The publication Dunkerque, Lille, the Champagne district and Benelux countries. The centre spread is a map of Paris which shows the location of the hotels in relation to the city centre attractions, Parc Asterix and Disneyland Paris.

Roger Simister, UK sales manager, said: "The aim is to relate masses of hotels to places that one might want to visit, as well as trying to cater for different types of customer - especially the smaller operator."

To coincide with the relaunch, Robin Sherry has joined Sally Line to ensure operators are fully informed through mailshots. There also will be a regular bargain of the month, backed by a quarterly issue of Customline.

● Call 01843 854226 for a copy of the brochure, or 01843 591515 for reservations.

▼ UK

Fury at vandalism

by William Golden

AN angry Scottish operator is demanding urgent action after his coaches were vandalised again on a visit to Blackpool.

Gordon Mayne, of Maynes of Buckie, had been the victim of a similar attack 12 months ago, so he took the added precaution of booking space in a secure parking area from local operator, J Abbott & Sons.

Despite it being an enclosed area with CCTV, two vehicles were damaged. Windows were smashed and videos and TVs stolen. Mr Mayne said: ""Something has got to be done.

"There should be special security arrangements, particularly during the illuminations, when it appears that organised gangs are at work in the resort - I understand a considerable number of vehicles were damaged on the same night

"I thought I would be safe using a secure parking area. To cap it all, a driver rang up later to say a TV and video had been stolen from a coach parked in front of a hotel on the Promenade.

A spokeswoman for J Abbott and Sons said the company took all reasonable security measures and it was the first time vehicles in the secure area had been attacked.

Blackpool CID said they had received reports of attacks on coaches, while a spokesman forBlackpool Council's car parks department said there had been only one reported incident in the council-run coach parks.

■ See Letters on Page 23

▼ UK

Rover turns up as number 100

THE CTC made a century at Coach & Bus 95 when the 100th coach operator signed on the dotted line. Rover European Travel, based in Stroud, Gloucestershire, joined up when company directors David and Carole Hand visited the CTC stand.

Mr Hand said: "We believe membership will enhance our professional reputation, as well as providing us with support from other operators and suppliers." CTC board member David Fenton said: "We are delighted to welcome our 100th operator - and it seemed appropriate that they should be signed up at Coach & Bus 95."

Ton up: CTC board member David Fenton (right) with David and Carole Hand

Rover European Travel has a fleet of 10 vehicles and runs day excursions, group holidays and private hire services, as well as European tours.

▼ Europe

Scandic special

LONDON wholesaler ICT has relaunched its joint brochure with Scandic Hotels and Stena Line. The dedicated Scandic publication features properties in Germany, Belgium and Scandinavia, plus two new destinations - Paris and the Rhine Valley.

Lead-in prices are £39 for two nights bed and breakfast in Paris, including ferry crossings, up to £259 for a 12-day Scandinavian capitals and cruise itinerary.

Stephen Moore, ICT sales and marketing director, said: "We are delighted that Scandic Hotels recognises the importance of our partnership to promote their properties to the UK coach and group market .

"Our first brochure created an awareness that Scandic Hotels offers quality and value for money. We intend to capitalise on this next year."

● For more information contact Mr Moore on 0171 538 4627.

CBW

Eurowatch

WEATHER

City	Average temperature last week	City	Average temperature last week
Athens	23C/73F	Madrid	23C/73F
Amsterdam	15C/59F	Oslo	13C/55F
Berlin	14C/57F	Paris	15C/59F
Brussels	13C/55F	Rome	22C/72F
Dublin	15C/59F	Stockholm	14C/57F
Lisbon	28C/82F	Vienna	18C/64F
Luxembourg	12C/54F	Zurich	17C/63F

DIESEL PRICES

(Courtesy AA Roadwatch)

Country	Diesel price per litre in Sterling	Country	Diesel price per litre in Sterling
Austria	0.57	Netherlands	0.53
Belgium	0.53	Norway	0.69
Eire	0.52	Poland	0.23
France	0.50	Portugal	0.45
Germany	0.50	Spain	0.44
Italy	0.54	Sweden	0.61
Luxembourg	0.44	Switzerland	0.65

HOLIDAY POUND

Country	Currency exchange rate	Country	Currency exchange rate
Austria	15.10 Sch/£	Italy	2,460 Lire/£
Belgium	44.25 BFr/£	Netherlands	2.43 Gld/£
Denmark	8.41 K/£	Norway	9.56 NKr/£
Eire	0.96 Punt/£	Portugal	229 Es/£
France	7.55 Fr/£	Spain	186.5 Pta/£
Germany	2.17 DM/£	Sweden	10.63 SKr/£
Greece	358 D/£	Switzerland	1.75 SFr/£

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BOVA FUTURA	**H624 FUT**	51 STR	EXTRAS: CST, CCD, D BUNK	
VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3500	**H853 AHS**	53 STR	EXTRAS: RS, AR, CDT, CCD, CS	
VOLVO B10M PREMIERE 350	**J718 CWT**	48 STR	EXTRAS: AIR CON, RST, RCD, TELMA	CHOICE OF 3
VOLVO B10M EXCALIBUR	**J734 CWT**	50 STR	EXTRAS: RS, DG, TEL, C, RCD	
VOLVO B10M EGS PREMIERE 350	**J751CWT**	50 STR	EXTRAS: RS, DG, EGS GEAR BOX,RCD, AIRCRAFT LOCKERS, C, TELMA	
VOLVO B10M PREMIERE 350	**K21 OUY**	49 STR	EXTRAS: CDT, CCD, TELMA, CS	CHOICE OF 2
VOLVO B10M PREMIERE 350	**K624 FEC**	49 STR	EXTRAS: CCD, CDT, CS, DG, AR, RS, CTG, WB	CHOICE OF 2
VOLVO B10M JONKHEERE	**K861 NST**	51 STR	EXTRAS: CURTAINS, RST, DG, RS, AR, R & PA, WB, CS, RCD, MTR, FRIDGE	
DENNIS JAVELIN 240 PREMIERE 320	**L837 LRM**	53 STR	EXTRAS: RS, DG, PD, C, MTR, SL	

£75,000 - £95,000

VOLVO B10MT PARAMOUNT 4000	**F710 COA**	65 STR	EXTRAS: TOILET, WB, RS, VIDEO, 5 MONITORS, DG, CURTAINS, BLINDS	
VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3500	**F613 MBT**	48 STR	EXTRAS: TELMA, TOILET	
VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3500	**F255 BHF**	51 STR	EXTRAS: RS, CS, TELMA, MTR, AIRCRAFT LOCKERS, SALOON, TOILET	
VOLVO B10M GL PARAMOUNT 3500	**F24 HGG**	53 STR	EXTRAS: CDT, RS, CS, BTW, CCD, MTR, AIRCRAFT LOCKERS	
VOLVO B10M ZF PARAMOUNT 3500	**F256 BHF**	53 STR	EXTRAS: RS, AR, DG, TELMA, PA, AIRCRAFT LOCKERS, MTR	CHOICE OF 2
VOLVO B10M GL PARAMOUNT 3500	**G517 LWU**	50 STR	EXTRAS: RS, AR, DC, RCD, DG, TEL, WEB, R, PA, PD, AIRCRAFT LOCKERS	
DAF VAN HOOL ALIZEE	**MIW 2418**	51 STR	EXTRAS: CS, CCD, CST, RE-PAINTED WHITE	
VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3500	**G512 NHH**	51 STR	EXTRAS: CDT, DG, CS, CURTAINS	
DAF PARAMOUNT 3500	**G555 JAW**	49 STR	EXTRAS: WEB, CS, RCD, RST, TV & V, WB	
VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3500	**G342 FFX**	51 STR	EXTRAS: C, T, SOLID REAR PANEL	CHOICE OF 2
VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3500	**G32 TCU**	53 STR	EXTRAS: C, REAR WINDOW	
VOLVO B10M GL PARAMOUNT 3500	**G66 RGG**	53 STR	EXTRAS: RS, CDT, CS, BTW, CCD, MTR, AIRCRAFT LOCKERS	CHOICE OF 2
VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3500	**G561 VHY**	49 STR	EXTRAS: CURTAINS, TACHO, CREW SEAT	
LEYLAND TIGER 290 PARAMOUNT 3200 AUTO	**H642 GRO**	53 STR	EXTRAS: RS, AR, C, MTR, CTG, CS, TELMA, DRIVERS FAN	

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VOLVO B10M PARAMOUNT 3500	**E235 VOC**	49 STR	EXTRAS: CDT, CS, CCD	
VOLVO B10M GL PARAMOUNT 3200	**E318 UUB**	51 STR	EXTRAS: RST, RS, AR, MTR, R & PA	
DAF CAETANO ALGARVE	**E168 KNH**	49 STR	EXTRAS: TV, V, CM, CDT, C, CS	
DAF JONCKHEERE P599	**E870 DJO**	49 STR	EXTRAS: SL, R, PA, WD, CS, CST, DG, PD	
DAF PARAMOUNT 3500	**F203 DRN**	51 STR	EXTRAS: RST, RCD, CM	
LEYLAND TIGER PARAMOUNT 3500	**F304 JFT**	49 STR	EXTRAS: RST, RCD, RS, CS, DG, TEL, AIRCRAFT LOCKERS, CM	
LEYLAND TIGER PARAMOUNT 3500	**F770 GNA**	49 STR	EXTRAS: RST, RS, PD	
DENNIS DUPLE 320	**G49 HDW**	57 STR	EXTRAS: PD, AR, RS, RCD, C R & PA	CHOICE OF 5
DENNIS DUPLE 320	**G202 DSK**	53 STR	EXTRAS: RST, C, RCD	
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FORD R1114 DUPLE DOMINANT II	**BRO 483T**	53 STR		
SETRA S215H	**WPC 202X**	53 STR	EXTRAS: CS	
LEYLAND TIGER DUPLE GOLDLINER	**UDW 901Y**	51 STR	EXTRAS: RS, PD	
DAF MB200 VAN HOOL	**JBZ 2079**	48 STR	EXTRAS: C, BTW, DRINK MASTER, W, TV, V, CCD, PD, DRIVERS, FAN	
DAF MB230 VAN HOOL	**JBZ 2078**	49 STR	EXTRAS: TV, V, CS, PD, CCD, WB, TOILET	
LEYLAND TIGER PARAMOUNT 3500	**A850 UYM**	49 STR	EXTRAS: CCD, CST, PLUG DOOR, CS, 4 EXTRA SEATS	
LEYLAND TIGER PARAMOUNT 3500	**1294 RU**	49 STR	EXTRAS: PD, CS, REAR O/S T, DB, WIRED FOR VIDEO	
MERCEDES 608D WHITTAKER	**C117 KMA**	21 STR		
DAF CAETANO ALGARVE	**C170 WKS**	50 STR	EXTRAS: RS, AR, SL, R, PA, RCD, RST	
LEYLAND TIGER PARAMOUNT 3200	**D592 MVR**	53 STR	EXTRAS: RS, AR, SL	CHOICE OF 3
DAF MB230 DUPLE 340	**HIL 3468**	55 STR	EXTRAS: CS, RCD	
TOYOTA CAETANO OPTIMO	**F714 EUG**	21 STR	EXTRAS: POWER DOOR, TABLE, MTR, C, R, AR	
MERCEDES 609D WHITTAKER EUROPA	**G846 MKY**	24 STR	EXTRAS: JACK KNIFE DOOR, LOW BACK BUS SEATS	
TOYOTA CAETANO OPTIMO II	**L 249 XRY**	21 STR	EXTRAS: POWER DOOR, TABLE, MTR, RS, AR, R & PA, C	

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DENNIS AUTO PARAMOUNT 3500	**B851 OSB**	51 STR		CHOICE OF 2

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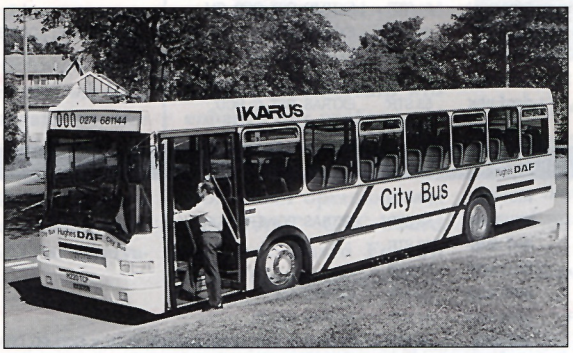

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Don't let lobby groups send us off course...

IT amazes me and many others how the organisers of Coach & Bus at the NEC can continue to make each show so much better than its predecessor. And, furthermore, can do so despite giving free admission to anyone who has the slightest interest in, or connection with, the industry (apologies for not talking about the show until this issue but last week was Questions & Answers).

I had, for example, a very interesting conversation with Pat Harris of the pressure group BUSK at the show. She told me she was "very annoyed" with what Marksman had previously written about what he then called her "inelegantly-named organisation" (Belt Up School Kids). She is, of course, fully entitled to hold and express views about how we run our businesses - but I fail to see her entitlement to infiltrate our trade show.

She was, however, far from being the only pressure group representative present. While admiring the excellent Optare low-floor bus, I became conscious of a lady with a notepad and a push-chair (but no child - for it was one of the tools of her 'trade') giving an Optare representative a dose of earache for not providing sufficient room for children to be carried without taking them out of folding push-chairs. (Surely push-chairs are made as a self-contained form of transport for small children and the whole purpose of them folding is to stow them away when an alternative form of transport is used? Would this lady expect to convey a child seated in a push-chair in her own car?).

Worse still, I discovered at least one manufacturer pandering to this sort of lobbying by exhibiting a bus with a pair of child seats fitted over a wheelarch. While I am fully conscious how difficult it is for a mother with a young child and perhaps shopping to use public transport, I am far from convinced that just two baby/child seats, side by side, on a large bus, solve any problems.

Where does the shopping and the (hopefully folded) buggy go? No provision was made for that. Babies and young children are inclined to be damp, smelly and sticky. While these two seats looked fine in their new state, this cannot last for many days if they are well used by a variety of babies and children.

Presumably the condition of these seats (and the safety harness) could attract prohibitions. But of much more concern, if a child falls out of these fairly high seats, or is dropped or banged when getting it in or out of the seat as a consequence of the vehicle braking or accelerating, who is going to get the blame?

It is crass folly to have shown things like this to do-gooding activists - who will be demanding them as rights before we know where we are. At least the Police and the NEC security guards managed to keep the militant disabled demonstrators out of the building and their football hooligan type of tactics did not disrupt the show.

As far as I am concerned, their demonstration was 100 per cent counter-productive. If the disabled think they are going to secure my assistance, co-operation and investment by a process of demonstration, disruption and damage, they are sadly, very sadly, mistaken.

Let me speak plainly, though I hope inoffensively: coach and bus operators are in the business of the commercial carriage of passengers. At best, public transport is only attractive to those prepared to travel with a mass of others and suffer the inconveniences of not going door to door and possibly by an indirect route with intermediate stops.

Approval: Optare lets low-floor sell on its merits

It is an unacceptable form of reverse discrimination against passengers who have already accepted a lower standard of facility than they could have enjoyed using personal transport to force them up stairs and steps they do not want to climb, or to stand to leave floor space for wheelchairs; and to lengthen journey times through catering for the special boarding and alighting needs of the disabled.

However much sympathy we may have for those who face the challenges brought about by disability - we face the challenge of getting a reasonable return on our investment in a competitive and commercially-orientated climate. Whether done voluntarily because of misguided compassion, or under the compulsion of Disability Discrimination legislation, there can only be one consequence if serving the needs of the disabled results in us giving a worse service to our existing customers - they will desert us and public transport provision will lessen as a result.

The disabled, the lobbyists and the politicians must be made to understand these simple facts of life and not be blinded by demonstrations or compassion. I, and the industry, can go along with a progressive introduction of lower floor vehicles, with bigger and bolder hand-rails, step nosings and bell pushes, clearer destination displays - and with any other sensible provision which makes the bus (or coach) accessible to a wider variety of people without giving a dis-benefit to anyone.

But that is as far as it can go. No demonstration, no protest, no legislation and no lobbying will convince me we can risk prejudicing the satisfaction of present customers to fulfil the total needs of the disabled.

I mention with approval the Optare low-floor bus, not least of all because Optare had let it sell itself on its own merits. Several other manufacturers had adopted the distinctly suspect notion of making vehicles seem lower than they really were by creating imitation pavements adjacent to entrances.

They, too, were counter-productive as, more than once, I nearly tripped going either on or off them when looking elsewhere - whether at the exhibit itself of seeing a familiar face approaching.

Generally, though, I was left with the impression of a new generation of buses which looked light and airy, with strong passenger appeal. In contrast, most of the coaches on display, despite the invisible price tags, seemed user unfriendly.

The size of passenger windows has generally reduced. I believe that this will save more lives than seatbelts and it has certainly resulted in livery styles which capitalise on the potential dreariness of the large slab of coach side thereby created.

Sadly though, designers do not seem to have risen to the challenge created by the smaller window to make interiors look bright and inviting. Instead there is an increased acreage of dark soft trim - with grey and blue (ugh!) predominating. It looks pretty funereal in its new state. I dread to imagine it after a few years of service.

On some coaches I noticed, and others commented to me, on the lack of grab handles in suitable positions for passengers descending entrance steps. I am also alarmed that impressive sweeping dashboards and wide courier seating seemed, on some models, to intrude to an unacceptable level into the platform area, making passenger access seem decidedly pinched. While driver and courier facilities are, of course, important, I believe passenger appeal should be the number one influence on design.

Built for comfort - not looks

TAKING this week's prize for most bizarre vehicle is this one from German-based Rotel Tours.

The editor reckons it's an elite group of German pigeon fanciers on tour, taking their pigeon loft with them. Jack Duckworth would approve.

It is, of course, a sleeper coach with the accommodation housed in the three-deck shed welded to the rear bumper. Based on a Mercedes 0303, it is probably fairly comfortable but with that massive overhang, one wonders what it's like to drive round corners.

However, if we were on the 12-hour travel leg of a tour, we'd rather be sleeping on this vehicle than the British equivalent - a seat so close to the one in front your knees are wearing a hole in the seatback moquette, and the dubious luxury of being able to recline a full two degrees from vertical.

'Pigeon-loft' looks but sleep would be possible

'Stuffed' in Turkey

AFTER two weeks in Turkey, one of the *CBW* staffers came back on to the British public transport system somewhat relieved by its high quality.

"The local minibus services running from town to town are collectively known as the Dolmusch," says our correspondent. "I happily got on to the Dolmusch on one particular day and got the last seat on the bus.

"Two minutes down the road, the Dolmusch stopped and another three people got on. It was a bit tight, but we managed.

"This might have been OK but the Dolmusch stopped again and again until there were 22 people, three suitcases and a couple of chickens aboard a vehicle designed to seat 12.

"Ironically enough (or perhaps not) the English translation of Dolmusch is 'stuffed' or 'squashed'."

Getting a breath of fresh air

NOTHING but torrential rain or sub-zero temperatures is going to change the latest fad - using open-toppers on London bus routes.

Operators like CentreWest, which has been using chopped RMs on route 23, must be more than happy with the effects of global warming since it allows them to extend the seasonally-worked vehicles into October duplicates when needed.

So much so, an open-top RMC sporting Cowie's South London turned up at Victoria rail station among Leaside's route 73 vehicles. The interloper could easily have gone unnoticed, since it was tucked among buses flooded in when the tube was closed.

Climbing up to the top deck to find it has no roof must be a bit of a shock for regular bus users.

The mole-like subterranean tube users must have been catatonic, scrabbling in their laptop carryalls for the Foster Grants. CBW

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P&O toasts coaching

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COACH operators will be the toast of sponsor P&O European Ferries when the year's big event, the Coach Industry Awards, kicks off on 25 November.

"The decision by P&O to sponsor this year's awards reflects the company's recognition of its increasing importance," said P&O trade sales manager Ray Brunton.

"The company hopes that, with the support of P&O, Britain's biggest ferry operator, we can continue to raise awareness of the coach industry and provide recognition for the people working in it."

The coach industry has supported P&O, too.

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Almost half off all P&O's passenger carryings arrive at the port by coach. It was the main growth area for P&O in 1994, has been a vital part of business this year, and is anticipated to provide the main growth next year.

"In recognition of the importance of coach business, P&O became the first and only ferry operator to provide dedicated coach staff at the ports to ensure coach passengers enjoy a smooth transfer through the port and on to the ship," said Mr Brunton.

Those lucky operators who managed to get themselves a seat at the Metropole Hotel, near Birmingham, and are looking forward to not only the award ceremony but the entertainment from Bob Monkhouse, can enjoy a drink on P&O before the celebrations really begin.

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Blackpool could become a no-go area for coaches

From Gordon Mayne

IT'S exactly 12 months since I last wrote to *CBW* and I am forced to write again over exactly the same problem - coach vandalism in Blackpool.

It's the busiest three months of the year for coach traffic to the Fylde coast and many operators have vehicles parked there over overnight and last week we had two on a week's tour.

Last year during the same week we experienced serious damage while parked in Turner's coach park so we decided to take extra precautions and this time round we booked in Abbots 'secure' parking area.

However, the vandals struck again with a vengeance despite the video cameras. They broke side windows and front screens in our two M-reg coaches - a Jonckheere/Volvo and Berkhof/Dennis. As last year they targeted videos, TVs and audio systems, ripping them out.

Double-glazing caused the thieves some inconvenience but they still managed to break in and then smashed the windows from the inside.

I understand that 60 coaches were given the same treatment that night and I've just had a driver ring me to report a TV/video theft from a coach parked in front of a Promenade hotel.

Neither the police nor the local tourism department seem to take the problem seriously. Surely it is time for special security arrangements in Blackpool's coach parks - particularly during the vulnerable period of the illuminations when it appears that professional thieves are at work in the town.

If it needs to be paid for someone should organise a fund with contributions from operators co-ordinated.

Unless things improve we will reach the point where it will not pay to take a coach to Blackpool. I vowed last year I wouldn't go back but I didn't believe the damage would happen again.

Gordon Mayne
Maynes of Buckie
Scotland

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Coach and Bus Week
EMAP Response
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The editor is always pleased to receive letters for publication in *Coach and Bus Week* and will, if requested, publish these anonymously. But please attach your full name (ie first name and surname) and address for our information.

Letter of the week wins a Corgi Classics model bus

Isle of Wight open!

From Christopher Wales

The perception by Marksman (*CBW*, 14 October) that the Isle of Wight is closed for Winter is quite wrong. It is time to put the record straight.

The Isle of Wight Tourist Board will confirm that one third of all holiday stays on the island are between October and March and more of the attractions are remaining open out of season.

Wightlink has just introduced extra sailing to the end of the year not only to reflect demand but also to show our commitment to growing tourism to the island throughout the whole year.

If any coach operator would like to see that the island is not closed for Winter, please give me a call.

Christopher Wales
General sales manager
Wightlink Isle of Wight Ferries
Portsmouth
Hants

Ask us about design

From Martin Mayer

Bus drivers wanted; must have narrow bodies, long arms and x-ray vision.

Members of the TGWU's Vehicle Construction and Design Committee were left scratching their heads over some of the cab layouts at last week's Coach & Bus 95 exhibition in Birmingham. Who did the manufacturers have in mind when they designed what for us is the most important part of the bus — the driver's cab?

Here were the best and latest of British bus design, yet several cabs were too cramped to drive in without banging your elbows on the cab door or window.

One bus cab entrance was so narrow that any larger-than-average driver would have found great difficulty getting in at all. We found the space for the ticket machine too far away on most of the bus cabs, which means stretching and leaning at every stop — unless only drivers with extra long arms are required.

X-ray vision is harder to come by but we felt it would be needed with some of the buses we saw. Some had bad blind spots (the worst was on one of the most prestigious new designs on display!) and many of the high dashboards obstruct the driver's low visibility range, a young child in front of the bus, for instance. And some exterior mirrors were impossibly sited for safe driving.

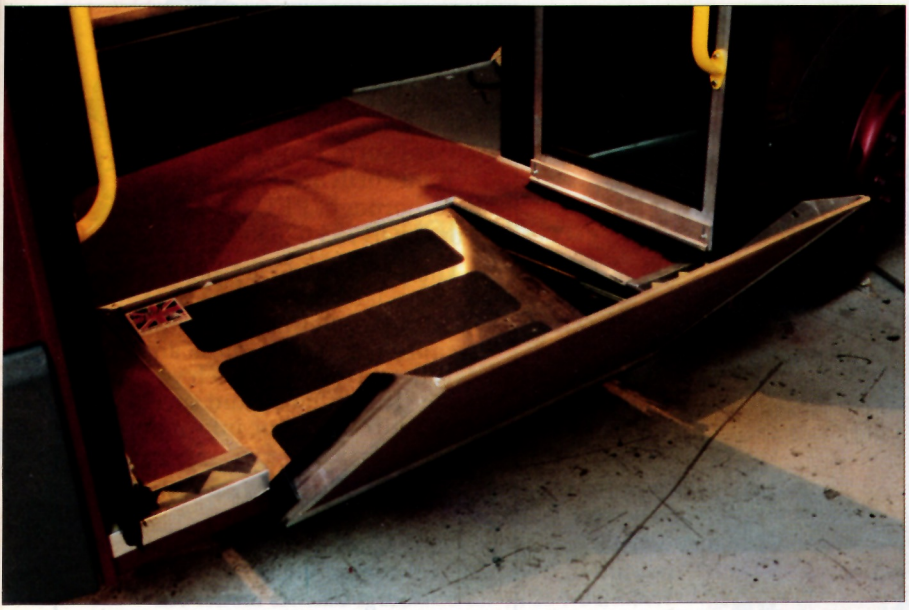
We also saw driver controls which were out of reach or dangerously sited, inadequate cab seats and poor (on one bus non-existent) cab heating systems. In fact, a litany of horrors, which we are in the process of writing up into a full report aimed mainly at TGWU members. Many of our local representatives have significant influence on bus-purchasing policy in their companies.

It was not all bad news, however. We did see some good design features, including the spacious roomy cab in the East Lancs Scania single deck, which also had good, well-laid out driver controls. The Dennis Lance decker with Northern Counties body had the best ticket machine siting, the Volvo B10L Alexander had good all-round visibility including low visibility and mirror location, and we liked the overhead cab air conditioning unit on the Mercedes 0405 Prisma Optare. These were just some examples.

We hope some of the manufacturers and operators will ask for our report, and put a bit more consideration into cab and driver seat design in future.

Hopefully, with a bit of specialist driver input from the TGWU (why don't they ask us?) the designs on show at the next exhibition might actually be as attractive to our long-suffering drivers as today's bright and smart designs are to our passengers.

Martin Mayer
Passenger services representative
General executive council
Transport & General Workers Union
Sheffield
South Yorkshire



Ingenious PLS Bridgit fold-out ramp on the new Marshall Minibus

Ricon welfare bus has fully automatic underfloor passenger lift

There's generous seat rake on this BAA Dennis Lance SLF/Berkhof

DoT's co bears N

Mobility unit's efforts result in crop of low-floors at Coach & Bus 95. Alan Millar reports

ANNE Frye, head of the Department of Transport's mobility unit, had good reason to feel pleased at Coach & Bus 95 in the NEC last week. Her campaigning for fully-accessible buses had borne fruit in the shape of a veritable crop of low-floor buses.

"I'm greatly encouraged by the quantity of accessible buses here," she told *CBW*. "Some manufacturers have done a brilliant job and others have got the idea. Two years ago, there were just two low-floor buses here and four years ago we were getting excited about crinkly handrails."

One new solution was on show on Marshall's prototype rear-engined Minibus.

Also a prototype, this was Passenger Lift Services' Bridgit fold-out ramp which is said to be capable of being fitted into a low-floor bus without having to modify the chassis. PLS believes it can also win retrofit business with this unit once it goes into production.

There was clear evidence that the tougher 1997 DPTAC recommendations are generating a new generation of buses with shallow steps - buses like the Iveco DailyBus 59.12/Marshall with a 250mm first step and a total floor height of less than 650mm.

At under £45,000 it is just £3,650 more expensive than a higher floor midibus and, barring an early move to compulsory use of low-floor midis, it promises to meet many of the immediate mobility needs of the future.

Mercedes-Benz, having debated whether it can afford the engineering costs needed to stay in the UK mini/midibus market it dominates today, is expected to have a similar vehicle on the market by March.

And alongside these, there still were plenty of NEC examples of the sometimes controversial split step entrances enshrined in earlier DPTAC recommendations. To some, they make buses more accessible, while others argue they can literally trip up the unwary who don't expect unequal step depths on either side of the same platform.

While the bus market has become convinced by the arguments for accessibility - helped by tendering conditions that stipulate DPTAC-compatible buses and by grants to help buy more accessible buses - it's quite a dif-

mpaign EC fruit

ferent story with coaches.

"The big area is high-floor coaches," Anne Frye told us. "The lack of progress isn't down to any lack of willingness by the manufacturers, but it is a more difficult task. We've done lots of brainstorming, but the problem is that there is no solution without seat loss. We will put up some funding towards this."

As part of its preparations for the Disability Discrimination Act, the DoT is looking urgently for technical solutions to make minibuses and coaches more accessible, but only where they are used on public scheduled services. Ms Frye says is because the Act will address civil rights of people's everyday lives.

"We won't bring in regulations before there is a viable solution," she promises and her unit is working closely with National Express to arrive at a workable solution. One of the biggest difficulties is toilet access and it may be necessary to design some sort of on-board mini wheelchair which can negotiate the aisles of coaches and get into toilet cubicles.

This may also explain why demand for access equipment is still low in the coach industry. At the show, Ricon's Tony Baugh admitted most of its equipment continues to go to community transport and local authority organisations.

"Until legislation makes it compulsory for coaches to be accessible, people in the coach side won't do it. It's an awful shame that people are going to have to be forced to do it because one or two do run accessible coaches very successfully."

Despite the industry's apathy, Ricon is pressing ahead with a 65in under-floor lift developed in the United States for high-floor coaches. It's coming soon to Britain and is expected to cost around £5,000 fitted. "We'll be doing our bit to make operators buy it," promises Mr Baugh.

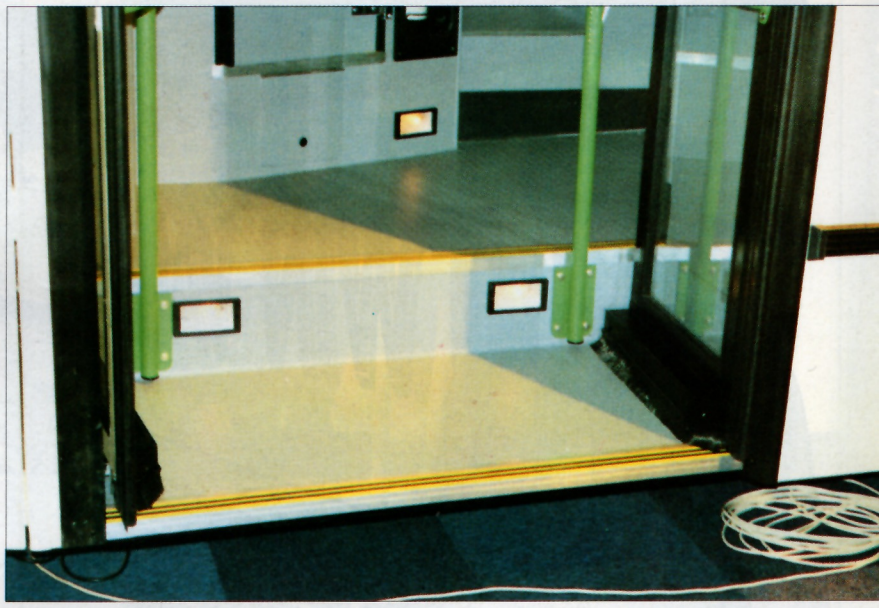
But even if every DPTAC and DOT-sourced recommendation is adopted, others will argue for more. Two lecturers from Sheffield Hallam University, Chris Rust and Prof Trevor Fiore (who has done some bus design work in the past for Renault), were casting their critical eyes over the buses at the show and saw room for improvement.

They have been influenced by the contrast between some of Sheffield's older buses and the city's capacious new Supertrams. "We want to see whether something similar can be achieved in the tight envelope of a modern bus," explained Mr Rust.

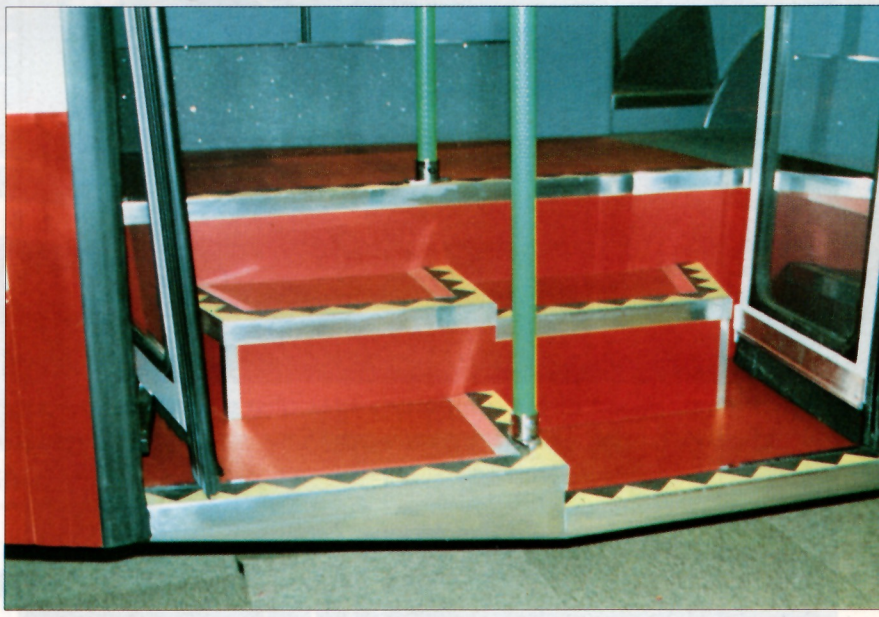
And while 1997 DPTAC legroom standards are making seats more upright, they were far more impressed by the generously-raked seats in a Berkhof-bodied Dennis Lance SLF for BAA at Heathrow.

"We're aware of the innate conservatism among operators," added Mr Rust. "It's significant that the BAA bus isn't going to a bus operator, but will be used by executives flying to America."

Bus passengers, he suggests, deserve better. CBW



Shallow entrance step on Northern Counties Dennis Lance decker



Do these split steps on Spartan TX/East Lancs Opus 2 help or hinder?

Lower DPTAC 2 steps on Iveco/Marshall have effective lighting

Eddie Pilling: proud of his company's specialist expertise

Coaches with wheel-chair-lifts are not only a boon for the dis-abled. They can be a source of extra rev-enue for the operator. But you need a special aptitude to make it work, as Mike Morgan found out

A hel

TWIN Valley of Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire has been doing chair-lift work for 15 years. Owner Eddie Pilling is proud of his company's expertise as specialist carrier of mentally or physically-handicapped passengers. But he claims that it's not an easy proposition for another operator to get into this highly-specialised coaching niche.

It all started in 1973 with a small coach business running nothing bigger than a 29 seater. Subsequent merger with Den Roy (a name still used for holidays) boosted the number and scale of vehicles as the fleet expanded to 15 - mainly Ford and Leyland.

But the pressures and maintenance challenges of ageing vehicles chasing work in the highly-competitive local coach hire market persuaded Twin Valley to cut back.

Spurred on by the retirement of partner Brian Nairn four years ago, Mr Pilling reduced the fleet to 10 and then to seven.

A parallel development was investment in purpose-built workshop in 1986 and new vehicles - he runs noth-

Premiere 320/Javelin is representative of modern Twin Valley fleet

Conversion to wheelchair accessible coach lifted the price of the 41 seater to £128,000

ping hand

ing older than four years old and his latest coach for the 1995 season is representative of not only the modern Twin Valley fleet, but of the type of business it attracts.

This 10-metre Plaxton Premiere 320 on Dennis Javelin is one of Twin Valley's three vehicles fitted with chair lift. It was ordered through Plaxton dealer, Kirkby of Anston. Delivered as a standard 43-seat short-wheelbase coach fitted with two-point seatbelts it was subsequently converted to carry up to four wheelchairs. Maximum capacity is reduced to 41 with permutations through six removable rear doubles and one of the rear row of five.

Transformation into a wheelchair-accessible coach lifted the total cost to £128,000 - effectively the price of a conventional 53 seater. Mr Pilling went to Yeates of Loughborough for the £10,000 conversion and painting. A Passenger Lift Services underfloor lift is fitted on the nearside at the rear taking up a small amount of space in the boot, although the available space would be increased if the heater was not fitted in this area.

Access to the passenger saloon for wheelchair-bound passengers is through a neatly executed doorway which mirrors the offside emergency exit.

Consequential changes include shortening the nearside luggage rack and amendments to the rear seat mounting so that wheelchairs can be 'driven' on board.

Unwin tracking is on both sides of the Premiere body to give flexibility with the accommodation but, rather than Mr Pilling's preferred quick release clamps for the seats, Yeates has used bolts. A removable insert covers the sunken gangway when wheelchairs are carried.

Although the exterior modifications are discreet, you can still 'see the join' inside the coach where the original seats were fitted. But this is the price you pay for a retrofit system.

There is another downside to retrofitment. The Premiere structure is built to comply with ECE R66 roll-over and as such qualifies for operation at 65mph. However, once modified the coach must be restricted to ▶▶▶

60mph - hardly equality of opportunity.

The market for new wheelchair accessible coaches is too small to make factory fitment a viable proposition, particularly since operators have their own preference for type of equipment. Perhaps the Disability Bill currently before Parliament will have the effect of rapidly maturing the marketplace.

Mr Pilling had the vehicle built to his specification based on his one and a half decades experience. He firmly believes in side-loading of wheelchairs and praises the PSL lift for its simplicity.

To test the system at work I drove the coach as we picked up a typical Twin Valley private party bound for Southport on a day trip.

The steep inclines, narrow roads and sharp corners around the brass band country of neighbouring Brighouse and Rastrick ably demonstrated the wisdom of buying a short wheelbase coach for operation in this part of West Yorkshire.

Nevertheless, access to and from Twin Valley's garage on Industrial Road into the main road in the centre of Sowerby Bridge required timely application of the ferry lift to avoid grounding.

But that's normal run-of-the mill territory for operators in the area. The real purpose of the test was to sample the operation of a wheelchair-accessible coach.

Twin Valley drivers are specially trained in use of the equipment - and they need to be if the passengers are to get the level of service they require.

Praised: side loading

To my surprise, among the party from the Whinney Hill Park Community Centre there were many more passengers with wheelchairs than I imagined. Three or four seemed no problem but there were four times this number — natural enough when you consider the mobility problems associated with passengers at the older end of the age range.

Most of our those waiting for their day trip to the seaside used a wheelchair as an aid rather than an absolute necessity.

This is where the hard work came in. They needed to be lifted on to the coach in the chair, helped to a seat and then the chair stored in the boot. Multiply this by 10 or 12 and, even with the lift, you have hard work - and very little boot space left should it be required for any luggage.

My experience confirmed this is an area of business where knowing what you are doing is essential, no matter how good the equipment available or how passenger friendly the coach. The Plaxton/Javelin was very comfortable and economical (13.1 mpg over the 254km trip).

The operator and its staff must be geared to the needs of the type of passenger which the vehicle is destined to attract. With a specialist vehicle looking and performing like a normal coach, the venture has got to be right. But, as Twin Valley has learned over the last 15 years, only if you understand the needs of your market. CBW

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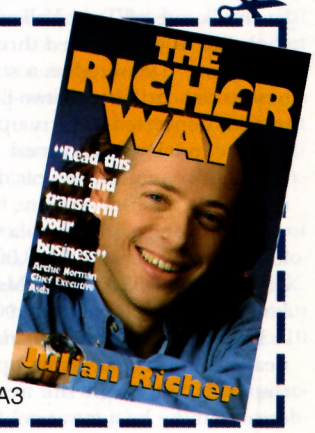

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SCANIA

Tri-axle Irizar Century makes its mark

Executive Travel so impressed it orders a second one

by Mark Williams

THIS Irizar Century tri-axle delivered just after Coach & Bus 95 impressed Executive Travel of Wolverhampton so much it prompted proprietor Gary Dixon to order a second.

Together with a two-axle Century now in service, and another due for delivery in November, Irizars will then form half the fleet. Like the others, this vehicle will be operating Continental tours and shuttles under contract.

Executive Travel is a story of incredible growth. It was formed only 14 months ago. Its owner, Gary Dixon, was on the dole until he began a chauffeur-driven car business 12 years ago,

"It's all about setting standards and getting a reputation," said Mr Dixon. "We do our own maintenance based on a fortnightly inspection. So far, we've a clean record with the VI, and have been able to get our rates for tour work."

Like many operators, Mr Dixon has been worried about axle limits for two-axle vehicles, particularly on tour and ski work. The tri-axle will end the weight barrier, he says.

The exterior design is Mr Dixon's, while the interior, based on a German-made 'butterfly' moquette, was designed by his wife. The coach has now had lettering added to the design.

PLAXTON

Dodsworth's faith in Plaxton pays dividends

ESTABLISHED Plaxton afficianado John Dodsworth is to run fuel economy tests on this new tri-axle Volvo B12T Excalibur alongside a four-wheel Excalibur.

"I've a feeling the B12T may return equivalent figures, or even better, even though the engine delivers 420bhp," said Mr Dodsworth. "

The tri-axle is the eighth Excalibur to enter Dodsworth's fleet, all used on its premium-priced executive work. It's been a long time coming, said Mr Dodsworth.

"We've known it was on its way for over a year, and have been involved with its development from the outset. For example, we wanted every seat to have an unobscured, panoramic view, which meant putting the toilet at the back.

"Taking this vehicle had another effect. The 'sun and mountain' logo at the rear was designed for this vehicle, but before we even saw it on the tri-axle, we had a vehicle delivery due. So we had them painted in this livery to maintain the uniformity."

The interior is purpose-designed by Oldsworth, with a moquette which reflects the exterior logo and colour. The coach carries 48 seats, air-conditioning, full servery, Telma and tinted double glazing.

"With a full load of passengers, a four-wheeler would be on or even over the limit," said Mr Dodsworth. "The tri-axle gives us peace of mind, particularly on back-to-back Continental work. I am sure that, with the popularity of air-conditioning, tri-axles will become the standard vehicle of the future."

Mr Dodsworth admitted the temptation to move to Scania Irizar, for example, had been almost too much but, despite some teething troubles with Premiere shortly after launch, he has kept the faith. He says that is now paying off; Plaxton build and quality control is exceptionally good. CBW

AW GROUP

Iveco's new EuroRiders practical — Coliseum

by Mark Williams

THOUGH Coliseum has a reputation for buying the unusual, joint md David Pitter says the decision to take two Iveco EuroRiders is a purely practical one.

The deal negotiated with AW Group of Ratby includes a three-year warranty on the drive train, a price which undercuts many other quality coaches, and a guaranteed buy-back. Not only that, but service centres are dotted all over Europe.

"The coach's running gear is more than 70 per cent straight from the Iveco EuroStar truck," said Mr Pitter, from Coliseum's Southampton base. "When I saw the Iveco map of Europe, it had so many red spots for the service centres it looked like it had measles."

Mr Pitter's first good look at the coach came with a visit to Spain to see LHD vehicles in service. "I was very impressed," he said. The coach attracted considerable interest at Coach & Bus 95, particularly for its build quality.

"The only vehicle at the show that I thought was better was Boon's Setra, but then it will have been a more expensive machine."

Based on a 345bhp Iveco engine, built at the former Pegaso works just outside of Barcelona, the EuroRider has ZF eight-speed transmission. The power, says Mr Pitter, will help mitigate the 62mph speed limiter, allowing the coach to pull at full speed up hills, and perform well generally without undue engine strain.

The bodywork is by Spanish independent Beulas. Many operators were impressed by the standard of finish and attention to detail on the vehicle, and sales will snowball, Mr Pitter reckons.

"I know of two or three operators in this area who are interested in Iveco. I've ordered a second for the Brighton Coach Rally."

The coach has air conditioning, 49 Vogel seats with seatback tables, electrically-operated mirrors, a Sutrak boiler and a coffee percolator which delivers the 'real thing' to Coliseum's customers. It will be engaged in tour work all year, much of it on a hotel contract feeding into the lochs and glens of Scotland.

MOSELEY

Skye-Ways Volvo Van Hool set to hibernate

THIS Volvo Van Hool Alizee has yet to be delivered to northern Scottish operator Skye-Ways Travel... and won't be entering service in any case until April.

Transport manager Alistair McRae said his company's policy was to order its new vehicles at the end of Summer, but that the highly seasonal work it would be doing wouldn't begin until Spring.

"The coach will simply be stored until the private hire work begins," said Mr McRae. "Though we have a lot of local work, this vehicle is reserved initially for private hire, and that will come in Summer."

Skye-Ways operates a 28-vehicle fleet, split roughly 50/50 between service buses and coaches. In addition to buses, it runs an express route between Glasgow and Inverness, and makes up the bulk of its coach work wih private hire and tour contracts. The Van Hool is a 49 seater with toilet and water boiler. It was shown at Coach & Bus 95.

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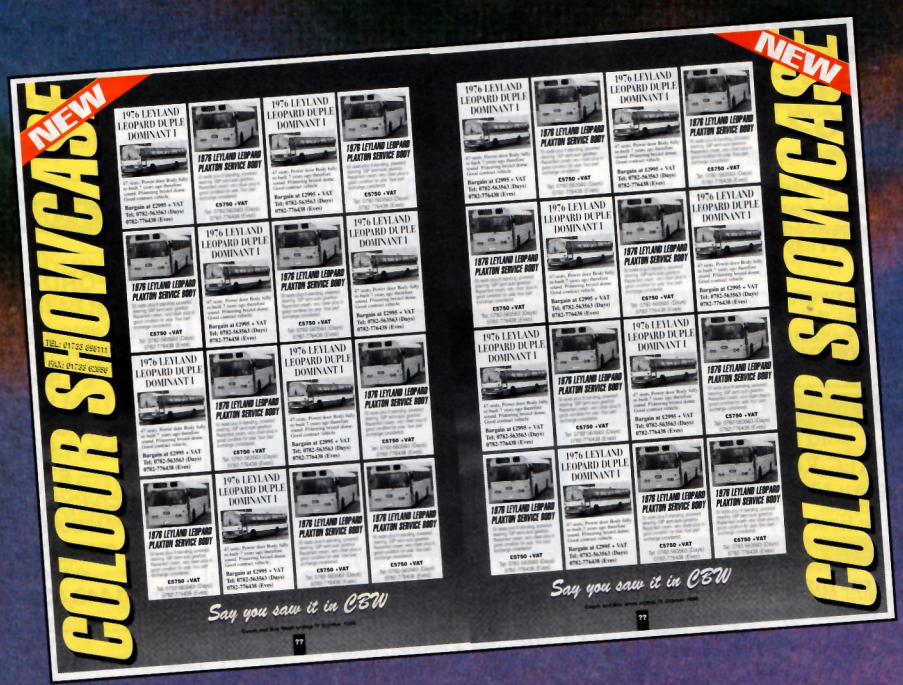

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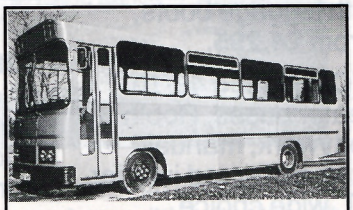

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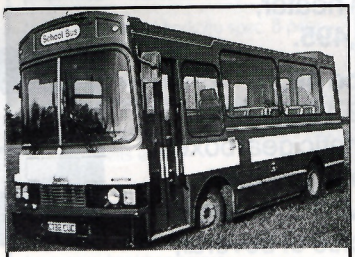

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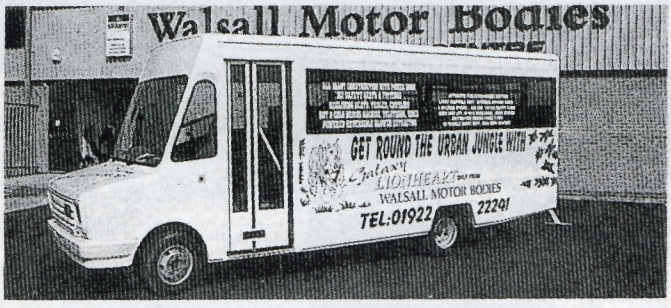

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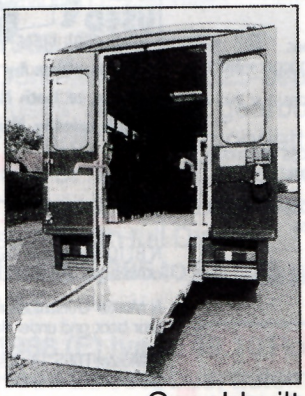

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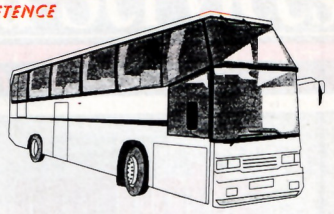

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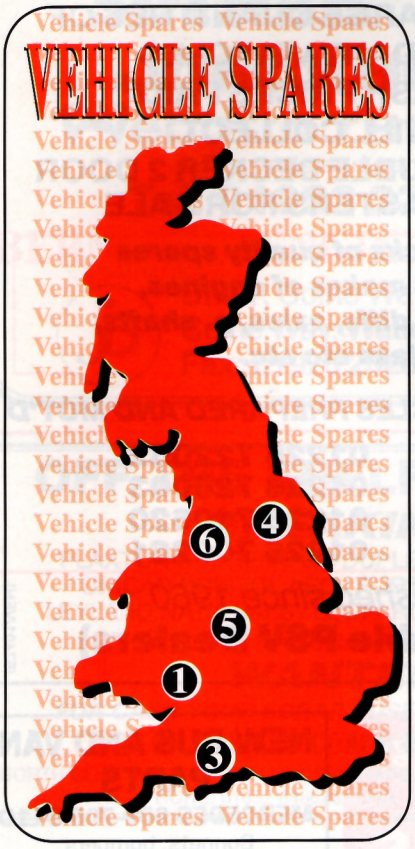

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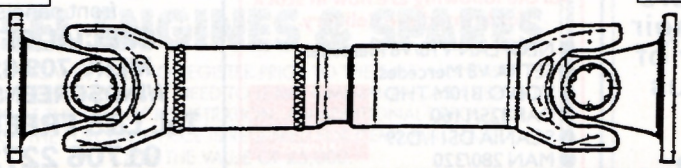

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(57469/TEN)

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A to Z DIRECTORY

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(57391/APP)

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As one of the UK's leading success stories of privatised bus companies, West Midlands Travel is committed to providing both high quality and effective service. With an annual turnover in excess of £160 million, generated through a fleet of 1650 vehicles, we are embarking on a bright commercial future, and we intend to get there through inspired management, close teamwork and a commitment to quality.

To maintain our competitive edge and to develop the business further, the Company has developed engineering management responsibility to a number of business units with turnovers of up to £16 million each. The business units have up to 200 vehicles and a unionised engineering workforce. A major remit will be to ensure that the highest standards of vehicle roadworthiness are achieved through the effective management of manpower and spares, therefore the individual must have a sound knowledge of vehicle certification, DTp Inspection standards and proven planning, man-management, team building and leadership skills.

Individuals will take direct responsibility for the engineering function in their business unit and preferably should be educated to degree level or be qualified in a discipline relative to the automotive industry. Experience of working with BS5750/ISO 9000 or comparable systems is desirable.

The Company is looking for high calibre, self motivated individuals who will be able to make an immediate contribution and in return are offering an attractive salary and benefits package.

Interested candidates should send detailed CV's including current salary details to:

Mr R T Jenkins, Personnel Director,
West Midlands Travel Ltd., St Andrews House,
10 St Pauls Square, Hockley, Birmingham B3 1QU.

(57390/APP)

TENDERS FOR LOCAL BUS SERVICES AND SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICE CONTRACTS

Surrey County Council maintains a list of operators who are invited to submit for the operation of local bus services and school transport contracts. Many of these are suitable for cars, taxis, minibuses and tail lift vehicles. Invitations to tender are sent to operators on the list and are not advertised individually in the press.

If you are interested in tendering for local bus services or school transport contracts and would like to be included on the circulation list, please contact:-

The Director of Highways & Transportation
Surrey County Council
Room 308A, County Hall,
Penrhyn Road, Kingston KT1 2DY

marking the letter for the attention of: Mrs D. Ingrasci

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OR FREEPHONE 0800 581885 *Mondays or Tuesdays*

▼ Coach and Bus

Berry gets on board

DENNIS Specialist Vehicles has appointed a new board director to take responsibility for all aspects of the company's aftermarket business in the UK and overseas.

A major part of **David Berry's** (right) new role as customer services director will be to head up Dennis's new multi-million pound customer service centre in Guildford (see news story page 10.

By Mark Barton

Mr Berry, 52, has previously worked in service support roles for Leyland, where he was overseas service manager, and Dennis, where he was general service manager. He returns to Guildford after two years as engineering manager of the 319-strong fleet of Britain's largest coach operator, Shearings.

He will be supported in his new role by **Mike Bishop**, general service manager, and **Andy Plumley**, parts manager.

▼ Coach

Winning combination joins Yorktour

COACH operator Eddie Brown Tours has restructured its Yorktour handling agent business with the recruitment of two new sales people.

Yorktour is now being run on a day-to-day basis by Vanessa Sigsworth and Rachel Steventon-Hill. Vanessa Sigsworth previously worked in the Eddie Brown Tours coaching operation and Rachel Steventon-Hill joined from the Guide Friday information office in York. As a handling agent Yorktour, which will exhibit at World Travel Market for the first time this year, arranges anything from corporate entertainment to guides for incoming coach operators.

"Quite a lot of our work is for other coach companies," said Deirdre Brown, who owns Eddie Brown Tours and Yorktour with her husband, Phillip. "And the fact Yorktour is owned by a coach company does help - we know what they want."

Yorktour is based in the centre of York and Eddie Brown remains in its traditional operating premises in Helperby.

▼ Bus

Developing career for Fergus Robertson at London General

LONDON'S largest independent operator, London General, has taken on **Fergus Robertson** as business development manager.

Mr Robertson, 31, joins management-owned London General from transport planning consultants, Steer Davies Gleave, where he managed the company's regional office in Brighton. He was previously with Merseyside PTE where, as principal policy officer, he was involved in the development of public transport policy including fares and ticketing. He began his career as an operations manager with British Rail.

In his new role, Mr Robertson reports to the board of London General directors. He has special responsibility for customer relations, service quality and planning, liaison with London Transport Buses, and is expected to play an active role in developing new business.

CBW Coach and Bus Week
The PSV industry's news weekly

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IT IS IMPORTANT TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

YOUR COMPANY DETAILS

1. What is your primary job title?
(Tick one only)

Owner/Director ❒ 01
Senior/General Manager ❒ 02
Engineering/Service Manager ❒ 03
Other, (please specify) ❒ 04

2. What is your company's main business function?

Bus Operator ❒ 01
Coach Operator ❒ 05
Coach & Bus Operator ❒ 02
Local Government ❒ 03
Other (please specify) ❒ 04

3. How many vehicles does your company own/operate?
(Tick all that apply)

	Buses	Coaches
1-5	❒ 01	❒ 10
6-10	❒ 02	❒ 11
11-15	❒ 03	❒ 12
16-25	❒ 04	❒ 13
26-39	❒ 05	❒ 14
40-100	❒ 06	❒ 15
101-400	❒ 07	❒ 16
401-1000	❒ 08	❒ 17
1000 +	❒ 09	❒ 18

4. Do you have responsibility for the recommendation/purchase and/or specification of the following?
(Tick all that apply)

	Pur	Spec	Rec
Vehicles	❒ 01	❒ 12	❒ 23
Parts/Spares	❒ 02	❒ 13	❒ 24
Oil/Fuel	❒ 03	❒ 14	❒ 25
Breakdown	❒ 04	❒ 15	❒ 26
Insurance/Finance	❒ 05	❒ 16	❒ 27
Fuel Cards	❒ 06	❒ 17	❒ 28
Training	❒ 07	❒ 18	❒ 29
Venue/Attraction Tickets	❒ 08	❒ 19	❒ 30
Ferry Crossing	❒ 09	❒ 20	❒ 31
Hotel Bookings	❒ 10	❒ 21	❒ 32
Theatre Tickets	❒ 11	❒ 22	❒ 33
Other, (please specify)			❒ 34

5. What type of work does your company undertake?
(Tick all that apply)

Private Hire ❒ 01
Day Excursions ❒ 02
British Tours ❒ 03
European Tours ❒ 04
Local Government Contracts ❒ 05
Emergency/Breakdown Services ❒ 06

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Roger Cunningham, Director, Dorset Travel Services.

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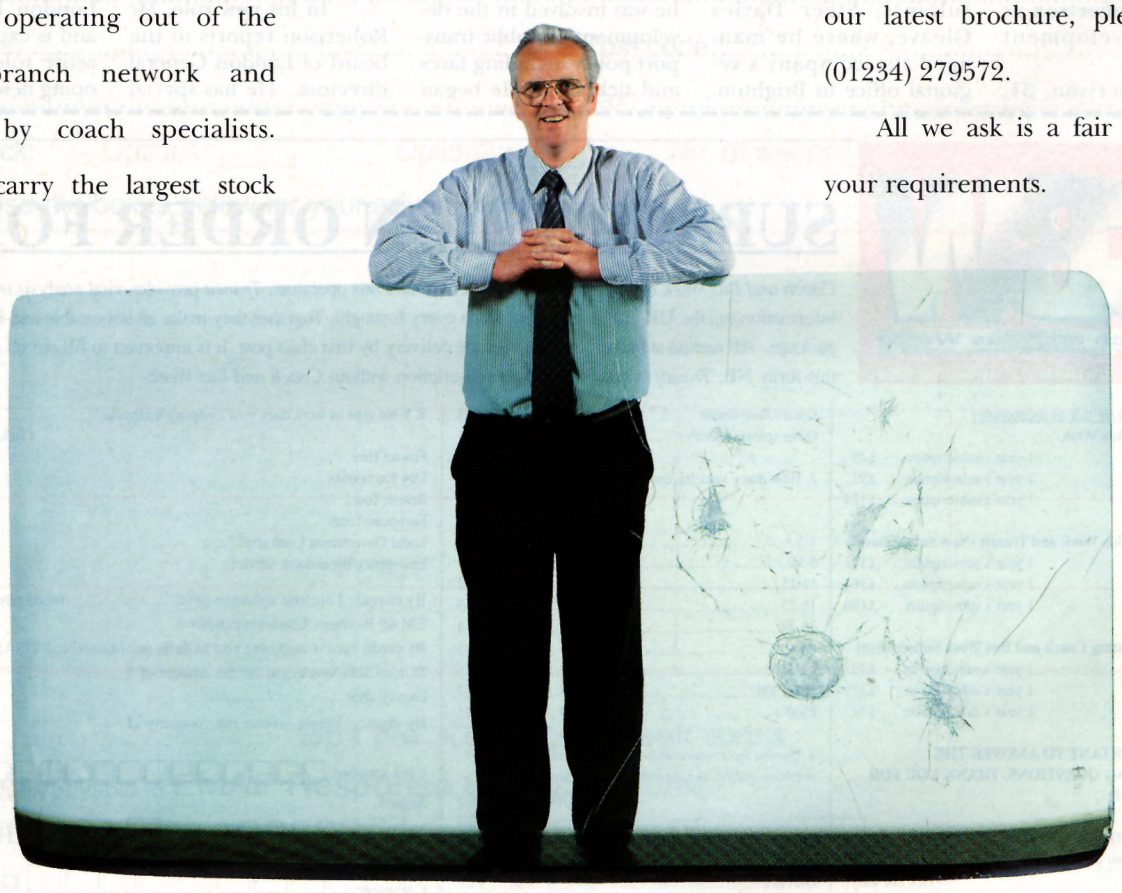

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